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Christopher Rose
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, CA. 93401-7906

Re: Ag Order 4.0 conceptual regulatory requirement options

Dear Mr. Rose,

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds through citizen action, education, field work and enforcement. Channelkeeper has over 18 years of experience in conducting citizen water quality monitoring activities in agricultural watersheds along the Central Coast, and we have participated in the development of the Central Coast Region's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program since 2008.

Channelkeeper submits the following general comments for the Central Coast Water Board's consideration regarding the Ag Order 4.0 conceptual regulatory requirement options:

Project Objectives

Channelkeeper generally supports the project objectives outlined by the Regional Board, which include the protection and restoration of beneficial uses to waters in the Central Coast Region. We highlight the importance of compliance with the State Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program, the State Antidegradation Policy, the Coastkeeper et al court decisions, and other relevant statutes. We generally view the proposed conceptual elements of Ag Order 4.0 as improvements to the existing Ag Order and important steps towards achievement of the stated project objectives.

With regard to toxicity in surface waters, Channelkeeper believes the project objective should ultimately be to eliminate, rather than merely minimize, toxicity in surface waters from pesticide discharges in order to achieve Water Quality Objectives outlined in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin.

Phasing or Prioritization

Channelkeeper is conceptually amenable to a phased approach that prioritizes application of requirements to locations based on conditions such as water quality impairment and risk to groundwater recharge areas. Phasing

based on achievement or lack-of-achievement of adopted timelines and milestones may also be appropriate. However, all water bodies currently identified as impaired on the 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments for agricultural pollutants should be addressed in the initial phase of Ag Order 4.0. Channelkeeper would likely not support an order, for example, that prioritizes certain impaired water-bodies over others based on the degree or magnitude of impairment.

Numeric Limits

Channelkeeper supports the inclusion of relatively lower (i.e. more stringent) numeric limits for discharges to groundwater and surface water. Limits must be stringent enough that they ensure agricultural sources are not significantly contributing to water quality impairments. Provisions should be included within the Order to ensure that numeric limits are enforceable by the Regional Board. Enforceable discharge limits that iteratively become more stringent over established timelines will help ensure that progress is being made towards achievement of water quality objectives.

We strongly support the inclusion of application limits for applied fertilizer (i.e. nitrogen) to ensure that progress is made towards improving the quality of groundwater supplies and surface waters. Nitrogen contained in irrigation water prior to fertigation should be counted towards limits on nitrogen application. We support additional limitation or prohibition of fertilizer applications for ranches that repeatedly exceed nutrient limits per the time scale.

We strongly support prohibitions on the removal of native riparian vegetation and support the establishment of ranch-level setbacks and vegetative cover requirements. Vegetative cover (riparian or buffer) must be of sufficient root depth to minimize migration of nitrogen to streams by shallow groundwater transport. Channelkeeper views these practices as essential to the restoration of water quality in many streams in our region (such as those in Carpinteria and Goleta Valleys), which are primarily impacted by nitrogen loading from shallow surface-groundwater interactions.

Timelines and Milestones

Timelines to achieve water quality objectives in some water bodies and groundwater supplies may vary in duration depending on the pollutant. However, near-term milestones (within the initial timespan of Order 4.0) to achieve discharge limits and to implement necessary monitoring provisions, should be adopted to ensure immediately substantive progress towards achievement of water quality objectives.

Monitoring

Channelkeeper is amenable to the inclusion of phasing stages for Ag Order 4.0 monitoring requirements. Phasing that allows for the consideration of achievement of timelines or milestones for meeting water quality objectives or discharge limits may be appropriate. However, Channelkeeper would likely not support an order that prioritizes monitoring in certain impaired water-bodies over others based on the degree or magnitude of impairment. It

is essential that the order includes requirements for individual discharge monitoring as mechanisms to verify the effectiveness of Best Management Practices at the ranch-level.

Channelkeeper is grateful for this opportunity to provide input on the development of Ag Order 4.0. We look forward to providing further input as the public process moves forward.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ben Pitterle', is displayed on a light gray background.

Ben Pitterle
Science and Policy Director
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper